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Put on the silver saddle,
And lead the horse to my father.
"Dear father, my own master,
"Listen to a civil word:
"Do not give me away to an old man;
"I hate an old man worse than death;
"I can not go walking with an old one,
"I rather stay an old maid.
"I will then comb my hair nicer,
"I will then plait it finer,
"And wind a red ribbon into it."

D. RECRUIT SONG.

12. THE WHITE SNOW.

(*Ne bely snegy.*)

It is not the white snow that shines in the open field,
It is the white stone house of my beloved that shines.
In that house there stands two oaken tables;
Behind those tables sit two bold young men;
They hold in their hands pens of swan feathers.
Near them stands a young girl and cries bitterly.
One of the young men tries to console her.
"Do not cry, my dear girl, do not cry nor grieve,
Thy lover is not going to be a common soldier,
But he is going to join the bold Cossacks of the Don.

[702] The taking away of a young man for service as a soldier used to be as strong a cause for grief to his family and friends, as his death itself, because the term of a soldier used to be 25 years—practically all his life. Therefore the girl is crying before the recruiting officers and all the consolation they can give her is the fact, that the young man will be put into a Cossack regiment—the Cossacks enjoying some privileges over the regular soldiers, such as the election of their own officers, better treatment and generally a more democratic institution.

But the powerful melody of this song indicates another current of feeling, than grief alone. The victorious solemnity and energy of this tune represents the manly response of a young man to his country; we hear in it the self-reliance born in an army which has centuries of victories behind it, which has made the country what it is, and which is ready to go and die for it, when called upon. This bold and calmly strong spirit has already affected even the recruit.